

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Freeman School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003-2004**

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Dates of On Site Visit: January 20th and 21st, 2004

Date of Report: February 4, 2004

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Cornbelt cooperative forms
- Referrals

- Publications of child find notices
- Yearly child find results
- Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) documentation
- Comprehensive plan
- Individual Education Programs (IEPs)
- File reviews
- Child count data
- Surveys
- Special education expenditures
- Private school information
- Placement alternatives
- Student Information Management System (SIMS)
- Budget information
- Data table C, suspension and expulsion Information
- Data table D, statewide assessment information
- Data table E, enrollment information
- Data table G, disabling conditions
- Data table H, exiting information

Promising practice

The Freeman School District considers a study skills class, for 7th graders during the first 9 weeks of school, a promising practice. Teachers report increased benefits for the students in note taking, test taking and organization skills.

Meets requirements

The Freeman School District has policies and procedures established, which address a child find system to locate, identify and evaluate children with disabilities. The district has identified systems for receiving documented referrals and has surveyed groups involved in the child find activities and reviewed files. The district has file reviews, surveys, and documentation supporting referral procedures per local, state, and federal regulations and guidelines.

The district follows the state and federal regulations and the local comprehensive plan regarding the placement and services of students voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools. The district has evidence of appropriate policies and procedures through the file reviews, surveys, and adherence to the rules, regulations and state approved comprehensive plan. The district uses relevant school data to analyze and review progress toward the state performance goals and indicators. The district follows and adheres to the state guidelines for reporting of students suspended, expelled, or dropped out as per the reports required by the state regulations.

Data table B of the school district state report indicates the district employs and contracts with personnel who are fully licensed or certified to work with children with disabilities. The district utilizes the comprehensive plan, local, state, and federal regulations, and staff needs assessments to fulfill appropriate personnel development. The district provides yearly needs assessment training for staff.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The monitoring team validated the study skills class for the 7th graders as a promising practice. This class is designed to teach skills and strategies to help students become better learners. Students have the opportunity to learn how to be a better student because they are taught skills that are needed to succeed in life. The study skills are taught to assist students in organization, note taking, and how to use reference materials. Students are taught to apply these skills to subjects that are taught in school. In interviews,

several teachers indicated they see the benefits of this class when working with students. Recently a student indicated to a teacher that skills acquired from this class were useful in his/her studies.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements for Principle One, General Supervision, with the exception listed below.

Out of Compliance

ARSD 24:05:17:03. Annual report of children served

The district does not have documentation to verify that services were being provided to one student listed on the district's 2002 child count. Interviews also confirmed there was not an IEP in effect on December 2nd of 2002 for this student. The Department of Education will withhold from the district the Individual with Disability Act (IDEA) federal funds for the misclassified student.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Data table B, district instructional staff information
- Data table C, suspension and expulsion information
- Data table E, enrollment information
- Data table F, placement alternatives
- Data table K, early intervention exit information
- Data table L, complaints
- Data table M, hearings
- Data table N, monitoring
- Age at referral
- Preschool information
- Personnel development education
- Preschool age
- School age
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- Comprehensive plan
- Surveys

Meets requirements

File, reviews, current practices and past reviews from the state and federal special education monitoring demonstrate the Freeman School District provides free appropriate public education (FAPE) for all children with disabilities. Training is provided for administrators on the policy and procedures regarding the removal of students with disabilities.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements of Principle Two, Free Appropriate Public Education.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Data table G, disabling conditions
- Data table H, exiting information
- Data table I, placement by age
- Data table J, placement by disabling condition
- TAT information
- Teacher file reviews
- Initial referral
- Surveys
- Parent and teacher report forms
- Comprehensive plan
- IEPs
- Permission to evaluate forms
- File reviews
- SIMS
- Referrals
- Psychological reports
- Progress reports
- Report cards

Meets requirements

File reviews indicate the Freeman School District completes valid and reliable evaluations in compliance with the rules. The school district has policies and procedures, which identify correct state and federal regulations in this area.

The district follows set regulations and requirements set forth by the state for testing instruments. Policies and procedures, file reviews and parental surveys indicate the IEP team considers all evaluations to determine a category of disability. The district has identified policies and procedures for proper reevaluation requirements. The district utilizes state eligibility testing procedures to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility. One hundred percent of files reviewed for evaluations or reevaluations ensure procedures are correct. The district has adopted policies and procedures to ensure that state regulations and procedures are followed.

Needs improvement

The student files reviewed by the district reflected only 29 % of the parents had input into the evaluation process. Preschool student files reviewed showed that parental consent for evaluations was only obtained in 3 of 6 student files. In student files reviewed with the disability of speech and/or language, functional evaluations were not consistently completed as an assessment tool for development of the child's IEP.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting requirements for Principle Three, Appropriate Evaluation, with the exception of evaluation procedures. See information under: Out of Compliance

Needs improvement

In 14 student files reviewed by the monitoring team, parent input into the evaluation process was documented. In the student file reviewed with the early childhood special education teacher, parental consent for evaluations was obtained. In student files reviewed with the disability of speech and/or language, functional skill based assessments were completed as part of the initial or reevaluation process. The monitoring team did not validate these issues as areas needing improvement for the district.

In five of 12 student files reviewed by the monitoring team, the psychological evaluation report indicated that the Human Figure Drawing was administered during the evaluation; however, the report did not include results of this evaluation. The district needs improvement in reporting accurate information to the parents. Also, when a young child is given a developmental evaluation, the information given to parents on the prior notice/consent does not reflect the area(s) of development to be evaluated (i.e. cognitive, physical, communication, social/emotional and adaptive functioning skills). A statement of the developmental areas to be evaluated on the prior notice/consent would provide parents a clearer understanding of the action being proposed.

From kindergarten through the high school level, functional assessment was completed; however, information was not skill specific. In several student files, the Brigance was completed, which is an appropriate functional assessment. The area, which needs improvement, is summarizing the functional assessment data. An example of how the district reports functional assessment information is, "Story problems 2nd-3rd grade level and computational skill 4th-5th grade level with calculator." Specific skill base data should be included when reporting the information, such as, "adds single digit numbers," "does not know basic multiplication facts," etc. Without this information, it is difficult to write skill based present level of performances, goals and objectives, which is an IEP content requirement. For more information on this issue, see Principle Five under Validation Results: Out of Compliance- IEP Content

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures

In a review of a recent reevaluation conducted for an eligible secondary student, the monitoring team found that transition assessment was not completed. There were no assessments conducted and/or used to assist with determining the student's interest area(s) and needs to make a successful transition to post-school/adult life. The secondary special education teachers indicated to the monitoring team that assistance would be helpful in the transition area.

ARSD 24:05:25:02 Determination of needed evaluation data

As part of an initial evaluation or reevaluation, the individual education program team and other individuals with knowledge and skills necessary to interpret evaluation data, determine what evaluation data is needed to support eligibility and the child's special education needs.

In all student files reviewed, with the exception of speech/language and early childhood focused files, the monitoring team found that students were given a Behavior Assessment for Children (BASC). Interviews with special education teachers indicated the Cornbelt Cooperative has directed district to complete a behavior assessment on all students suspected of a disability in which a psychological evaluation is requested. Special educators have been instructed by the cooperative to send the BASC to parents and give it to the regular education teacher(s) to complete as a screening device for behavior concerns. Based on these findings, the monitoring team concluded that the district does not consider the child's individual needs when making the determination of needed evaluation data. When making the determination to assess a student's social/behavior skills, concerns should precipitate the need for a behavioral evaluation.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Data table L, complaints
- Data table M, hearings
- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Public awareness information
- Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) disclosure
- Comprehensive plan
- State surrogate document
- Parental rights
- Personnel training
- Consent and prior notice forms
- File reviews
- Special education handbook
- Student files
- School newsletters

Meets requirements

The Freeman School District's policies and regulation requirements, parental surveys and file reviews indicate the district ensures notification to parents of their rights under IDEA. District policies and procedures ensure parents fully understand for what activity consent is being sought. Policies, procedures and training for surrogate parents are in place in the district.

The district's policies and procedures provide all parents the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning their child in the provision of a free and appropriate public education and FERPA. The district has policies and procedures to address complaint issues. The district adheres to the federal, state, and local policies and procedures regarding requests for due process hearings, should there be one.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements of Principle Four, Procedural Safeguards.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Student progress data
- Budget information
- Data table K, early intervention/exit information
- Data table N, monitoring
- Surveys
- Report form
- Complaints
- File reviews
- Personnel training
- IEPs
- Special education handbook

Meets requirements

Documentation supports the Freeman School District meets requirements in collaboration of general and special education teachers for growth of individual students. Student file reviews by the district staff and parent surveys indicate that policies and procedures are in place and are being followed for the provision of an appropriate IEP team. The district has policies and procedures in place for IEPs to be appropriately developed and in place for each eligible student. The district utilizes an appropriate IEP format and ensures that each IEP contains the required content.

Student file reviews indicated all students, when appropriate, had a coordinated set of activities to prepare them for post school activities. The student files reviewed show correct measurable annual goals 97%, modifications and accommodations 100%, and parental notice of progress reports at the same time as the general education students. Student file reviews showed 91% of files had functional assessments, which were used to complete writing of the goals and objectives. Student file reviews indicated that 97% of the IEPs were reviewed on or before the annual review date. Written notices for all IEP meetings with the required content are provided to all parents and/or guardians.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting requirements Principle Five, Individualized Education Program, with the exception of IEP content, transition, participation in IEP team meeting and related services.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student's identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In 13 of the 14 student files reviewed by the monitoring team, present levels of performance were not linked to functional evaluation and did not contain skill-based strengths, needs or how the disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general curriculum. In addition, 4 of the 13 present levels of performance reviewed did not include parental input. The present levels of performance stated skills that were not linked back to the functional assessment. For example, for a student whose disability was in written expression, the functional assessment indicated below average capitalization, punctuation, sentence writing, and spelling skills. The student also had below average functional skill in reading accuracy, reading comprehension and word recognition. The following information was noted in the present level of performance: "skill/area to be addressed: reading, English, spelling; Strengths: ___ strengths include his/her attitude, friendliness and his/her work ethics. Academically ___ does well in oral work. Weaknesses: ___ academic weaknesses include his/her written work and his reading accuracy and comprehension. In these subjects ___ is at the ___ grade level. General Curriculum: ___ participates in the general classroom for social studies, science, and math. In the resource room ___ receives small group instruction at his/her level and rate of learning. Parent Input: (no information was documented)."

ARSD 24:05:27:13:02 Transition services

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

In one student file that required transitional services to be addressed this school year, the team had met and written an updated IEP. However, no transitional information was provided in the present levels of performance. In addition, a transition plan was not written to address the five transition areas on the IEP form. It did not address who would be responsible to carry out the activities/goals nor were dates given as to when activities would be initiated or completed. A page attached to the IEP was noted as the student's transition plan. The information was an outline of what the student would need to complete at each grade 9-12 (i.e. 12th grade A. Attend Post-High Planning Day, B. Research 3 career choices on the CHOICES computer program, C. Write a resume and letter of application for the Work-Shadow Program, D. Attend 2 days of work-shadow in Sioux Falls, E. Make 2 on-campus visits for post-high planning purposes, and F. Work release for part of the school day.)

The monitoring team reviewed the only transition file that had been completed by the current teacher for compliance findings. An interview with the secondary special education teacher indicated minimal knowledge and experience in the area of transition services. Staff indicated further training and technical assistance would be beneficial.

ARSD 24:05:30:16.01.Transfer of parental rights

The student and his/her parents must be informed of the transfer of parental rights one year prior to the student turning 18. In a student file review, the team identified a student was informed of the transfer within a shorter timeframe. The student turned 18 on 1-04-04, and was informed of this transfer of rights on 10-16-03.

ARSD 24:05:27:12 Graduation

The IEP team is required to address graduation requirements one year prior to the student's graduation. The monitoring team noted one student file, does not have the required documentation for graduation completed one year prior to the student's May, 2004 graduation from a secondary program. A plan of what all students in the district are required to complete prior to graduation was attached to this student's (10-16-03) IEP. The graduation planning process requires the placement committee to address and document the specific requirements the student must complete to graduate.

ARSD 24:05:27:04 Determination of related services

ARSD 24:05:27:03. Placement committee to determine related services

In deciding whether a particular developmental corrective, or other supportive service is a related service, the members of the IEP team shall review the results of the individual evaluations used to determine the child's need for special education. Based on the specific special education services to be provided, the team shall determine whether related services are required in order to implement the special education program being recommend.

In two student files reviewed by the monitoring team, emotional/behavioral issues are referenced throughout the evaluation and IEP as significant concerns. Counselor(s) were in attendance at both IEP meetings. In one student file, the IEP has a behavior goal and objectives. Interview with staff indicated that both students are receiving counseling services, either from the school counselor or an outside agency. However, counseling was not documented as a related service in either student file. In developing a child's IEP, the members of the placement committee must determine if any developmental, corrective or other supportive services are required to assist a child to benefit from special education. These services must be written into the IEP as related services.

In addition, counseling was addressed as a related service in one student's file, but no goal or objectives were written as part of the child's IEP.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Data table E, enrollment information
- Data table F, placement alternatives
- Data table G, disabling conditions
- Data table I, placement by age
- Data table J, placement by disabling condition
- Data table N, monitoring
- File reviews
- Surveys

Meets requirements

The Freeman School District has policies and procedures in place for addressing the least restrictive environment (LRE) of students. Behavioral intervention plans have been written for students who require them. Inclusion practices for preschool children are documented.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements of Principle Six, Least Restrictive Environment.